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Closing Remarks

**Steven Edminster, USAID Governance Officer
For the Transparent and Accountable
Governance (TAG) Project's Workshop with
Local Resource Partners on Refinements to
Training in Participatory Barangay
Planning and Budgeting (PBPB)
Cagayan de Oro City, February 1, 2006**

Colleagues, Friends, Ladies and Gentlemen,
Good Afternoon.

On behalf of the U.S. Government, I am
honored to have the opportunity to offer
some brief remarks as we bring this workshop
on participatory barangay planning and
budgeting to a close. I congratulate all of
you for the hard work you have put in over
the past two days. Your insights and

dedication to improving local governance are impressive. And, your collective efforts to update your training methodologies will make your work in participatory barangay planning and budgeting even more effective than it already is.

I also commend you on your agreement to track key indicators that will enable all of us to more effectively tell the story of improved barangay and municipal governance. You already have a very good story to tell, as a 2004 evaluation of the Transparent and Accountable Governance Project (TAG) shows.

This evaluation revealed that your facilitation of participatory planning and

budgeting exercises enabled citizens in the ARMM and adjacent conflict-affected areas to learn, often for the first time, things as simple as the amount of their barangay's and municipality's internal revenue allotment. Your efforts also have given average people a voice in setting their community's priorities, also in many cases for the first time. Finally, it is worth noting that many barangays did not even have a budget plan before you started working with them.

These examples point to the success you have had in introducing basic transparency and public participation into local government in a very challenging environment. It is my hope that your plans for tracking key

indicators agreed to, here in this workshop, will help provide the data to show unequivocally that LGU transparency and public participation in the ARMM contributes to better government planning, improved service delivery, and reduced corruption - all in a sustainable manner.

We at USAID are very proud of our partnership with you in providing technical assistance and carrying out important training for improved local governance. We admire your dedication and commitment and look forward to hearing more about the success of your work in the near future.

Thank you and good afternoon.

